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Committee on Conferences
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Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Yotam **Goren** (Israel)

Chapter I
Organizational matters

A. Membership

1. In its resolution 43/222 B, the General Assembly decided to retain the Committee on Conferences as a permanent subsidiary organ. Pursuant to the provisions of that resolution, in 2015 the Committee was composed of the following Member States: Austria, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Côte d' Ivoire, France, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Mauritania, Namibia, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Uruguay.

B. Officers

2. The Committee elected the officers for 2015 at its organizational session for 2015 (536th meeting), held on 22 April 2015, and at its 537th meeting, held on 29 June 2015. Following the resignation of Imelda Smolčić of Uruguay, the Latin American and Caribbean States nominated Marcelo Eliseo Scappini Ricciardi (Paraguay), another member of the Committee, to replace her as Chair. At the opening meeting of the substantive session (538th meeting), on 8 September 2015, the Committee elected the following officers to serve in 2015:

Chair:

Marcelo Eliseo **Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay)

Vice-Chairs:

Ljilja **Grgić-Stojanović** (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Hiroshi **Onuma** (Japan)
Cheikh Tidiane **Deme** (Senegal)

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3. Also at its organizational session, the Committee agreed in principle that the Chair would undertake informal consultations with a view to determining the composition of its Bureau for 2016 and that the outgoing Chair and members of the Bureau would continue in their capacity until the 2016 Bureau was elected.

C. Organization of work

4. At its organizational session, the Committee also agreed to follow the guidelines adopted in 1994 and 1995 with regard to its consideration of intersessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings and to meet, as required, to review proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings during sessions of the General Assembly.

5. Also at its organizational session, the Chair proposed that the Committee meet in order to review the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2016 and 2017.

6. At the same session, the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management addressed the Committee.

7. At the 537th meeting, on 29 June 2015, the Secretary of the Committee introduced the provisional calendar of conferences and meetings in the economic, social and related fields for 2016 and 2017 (E/2015/L.8). The Committee reviewed the provisional calendar and recommended its adoption to the Economic and Social Council. The recommendation of the Committee was transmitted in a letter dated 1 July 2015 from the Chair of the Committee to the President of the Council (E/2015/85).

8. The Committee held its substantive session from 8 to 14 September 2015 (538th to 540th meetings). At the opening of the substantive session, the Under-Secretary-General introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/70/122). During the formal meetings, statements were made by the representatives of France, Israel, Japan, Paraguay, the Russian Federation, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania.

D. Programme of work

9. At its organizational session for 2014 (529th meeting), held on 23 April 2014, the Committee requested that the Secretariat submit the provisional agenda for 2015 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2015. At its organizational session for 2015 (536th meeting), held on 22 April 2015, the Committee adopted the provisional agenda (A/AC.172/2015/L.1) and requested that the Secretariat submit a provisional agenda for 2016 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2016. The Committee also decided to include in its programme of work for the year, prior to the Committee's substantive session or upon request, informal briefings by the Secretariat on issues relating to conference management of interest to Member States.

E. Participation of observers

10. Three Member States, one non-member observer State and one intergovernmental organization were represented as observers at the organizational, resumed organizational and substantive sessions of the Committee: Cuba, Germany, Indonesia, the Holy See and the European Union.

Chapter II
Calendar of conferences and meetings

A. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

11. At its 538th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee on Conferences considered the sections of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (see A/70/122, sect. I.A, and supplementary information,[1] sect. I) containing requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243, by which the Assembly decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly might meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

Conclusions and recommendations

12. **The Committee on Conferences recommended that the General Assembly explicitly authorize the following bodies to meet in New York during the main part of its seventieth session, on the understanding that all such meetings would be allocated conference services on an "as available" basis, in such a way that the work of the Assembly and its Main Committees would not be impeded:**

(a) **Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People;**

(b) **United Nations Disarmament Commission;**

(c) **Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East;**

(d) **Committee on Relations with the Host Country;**

(e) **Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women;**

(f) **United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.**

B. Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2016 and 2017 and related matters

13. At its 538th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee reviewed and adopted the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2016 and 2017 (A/AC.172/2015/L.2).

C. Intersessional departures for 2015 and related matters

14. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/250, approved the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2015, as submitted by the Committee on Conferences, and authorized the Committee to make any

[1] See http://coc.dgacm.org/2015/Documents/2015_Supplementary_Information.pdf.

adjustments that might become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. The calendar was issued as document A/AC.172/2015/2.

15. The Committee on Conferences approved the following requests:

(a) Request received in December 2014 from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to hold four meetings outside of regular meeting hours and also to extend its autumn session of 2014 by two days;

(b) Request received in April 2015 from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to extend the duration of three of its meetings of its winter session of 2015 beyond regular meeting hours;

(c) Request received in 2014 from the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for an additional plenary meeting during the eighth session of the Conference, in June 2015;

(d) Request received in 2015 from the Commission on the Status of Women for an additional meeting during its fifty-ninth session;

(e) Request received in 2015 from the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to hold a meeting outside of regular meeting hours.

Chapter III
Meetings management

A. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of conference-servicing resources

16. At its 538th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee on Conferences considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences containing statistical data and analysis of the utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that met in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi (see A/70/122, paras. 5-14, and supplementary information,[1] sect. II).

17. The Committee also heard a report by the Chair on the consultations held with the intergovernmental bodies whose utilization rate had fallen below the 80 per cent benchmark over the past three years, namely, the Committee on Information, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group, the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund, and the letter sent to the President of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), outlining possible measures for improving utilization rates. As a result of those efforts, the Committee on Information and the President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund agreed to make greater efforts to improve their utilization rates, and notable improvements were recorded between 2013 and 2014 in the utilization rates of UNCITRAL, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization.

18. In response to questions from delegations, a representative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management said that the Secretariat presently had no mechanism to record in the utilization statistics the breaks taken during meetings.

2. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

19. At the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required" (see A/70/122, para. 15, and supplementary information,[1] sect. III).

3. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

20. Also at the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groups of Member States (see A/70/122, para. 16, and supplementary information,[1] sect. IV).

4. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

21. Also at its 538th meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (see A/70/122, para. 17).

5. Utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa

22. At the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa (see A/70/122, paras. 18 and 19).

B. Impact of the implementation of the capital master plan, strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters during its implementation

23. Also at the same meeting, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the impact of the implementation of the capital master plan on meetings held at Headquarters (see A/70/122, para. 20, and supplementary information,[1] sect. V).

24. One delegation drew attention to the need to improve the videoconferencing infrastructure at the four duty stations and at the regional commissions, in line with General Assembly resolution 69/250. In response to questions from delegations, a representative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management said that videoconferencing equipment had been installed in the main conference rooms at Headquarters and sign language interpretation and documents in Braille were provided on request at meetings held in New York and Geneva.

Chapter IV
Integrated global management

25. At its 538th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning integrated global management (see A/70/122, paras. 22-36, and supplementary information,[1] sect. VI).

26. The meetings management system, gMeets, was operational at the four main duty stations. The documents planning and processing system, gDoc, had been launched in Geneva and New York in May 2014. The computer-assisted translation and terminology management system, gText, and the data warehouse, gData, had been rolled out at the four main duty stations.

27. Draft revisions of the bulletins of the Secretary-General on the organization of the Department and the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna had been submitted to the Department of Management for review and consultation. Conference service managers in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna would report not only to their respective Director-General but also to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. The bulletins would be completed by the end of 2015.

Chapter V

Matters related to documentation and publications

28. At its 538th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee on Conferences considered chapter IV of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning matters related to documentation and publications (see A/70/122 paras. 37-51, and supplementary information,[1] sect. VIII).

29. In response to questions from delegations, a representative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management explained that the two document assistance centres at Headquarters provided print-on-demand, print-ordering and scanning services, as well as advice on accessing documents electronically. Owing to resource limitations, laptop computers were loaned only when available.

30. Delegations were concerned that the detailed time frame for completing the digitization of important older United Nations documents had not been prepared as requested in General Assembly resolution 69/250.

31. In response to questions from delegations, a representative of the Department said that the Coordinator for Multilingualism would, in the coming months, consult Member States to draw up a strategy for promoting multilingualism and achieving language parity. The transition to a new electronic document management system and the issue of interfacing of different applications had unexpectedly caused some non-simultaneous release of parliamentary documents. The methodology of data extraction needed to be adjusted to properly reflect corrigenda and reissuances.

Chapter VI
Matters related to translation and interpretation

32. At its 539th meeting, on 8 September 2015, the Committee considered the section of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning matters related to translation and interpretation (see A/70/122, paras. 52-63).

33. Delegations sought information regarding the replacement of retirees. A representative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management said that outreach and recruitment had been improved through cooperation with universities in the memorandum of understanding network. New translators and interpreters were trained internally to ensure that their work was of the required standard.

34. The posting to Vienna of several staff members from the French Translation Service in New York would address capacity issues, increase mobility and allow documents to be processed overnight. The cost implications and the possibility of extending the initiative to other duty stations would be studied after the two-year pilot period.

35. The global terminology portal had been developed with input from all four duty stations and integrated in the gText system.

36. Interpreters servicing a meeting held away from their duty station were subject to the administrative instruction on official travel (ST/AI/2013/3). Concerns were raised that the performance of interpreters could be adversely affected if they arrived only four hours before a meeting.

Annex I

Draft resolution

[To be inserted]

Annex II

Draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations and of the principal organs of the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and treaty bodies established under the auspices of the United Nations for 2016 and 2017

[To be inserted]